





# THE SONG OF SONGS

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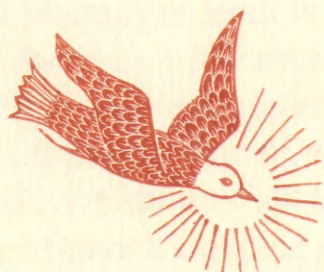
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PRINTED AND MADE IN GREAT BRITAIN.

# THE SONG OF SONGS

CALLED BY MANY THE CANTICLE OF CANTICLES  
PRINTED AND PUBLISHED AT THE GOLDEN COCKEREL  
PRESS AT WALTHAM ST. LAWRENCE IN BERKSHIRE  
IN THE YEAR MCMXXV





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## PREFACE.

The present rendering of the Song of Songs is not so much a fresh translation as a version of versions of the work.

It seems a definite misreading to call the book the SONG of SOLOMON, since the King figures throughout in a distinctly invidious and slightly ridiculous light, a man of exaggerated speech and roving fancy; and moreover, a rejected lover.

The Song of Songs must in fact be regarded as the first Opera, written with an avowedly popular appeal, a protest against polygamous ideals, of which Solomon had given such striking examples. The thesis plainly put forth is that polygamy is artificial, ponderous, sickening; while monogamy is contrasted as natural, dewy as the young day, inspiring as the sounds and scents of spring. Solomon's method of wooing with opulent bribery is placed in clear contrast with the simplicity of the rustic lover, a bundle of myrrh exhaling the fragrance of the country-side, faithful through all to his one true love.

The stupidity, if not duplicity, of the two Brothers of the Bride, who reckon nought of the honour of their women, disclosed towards the end, is a passing hit at those men of Israel and Judah who were too lazy or low-principled to interfere with the propensities of local Solomons.

For the aforesaid reasons many terms are varied from the traditional, and a paraphrase is used in places where a literal version might bewray the sense, that is, the sense assumed to be the whole plan of the poem. For instance, *harem*, instead of



*store-rooms; Take me behind thee, instead of draw me after thee; right are they to love thee, instead of the righteous love thee.* This last is entirely without meaning, if our reading of the intention of the Song has any reasonableness. Original or translated, it is intelligible, only on the supposition that Solomon the wise, the righteous, in a mood of highest inspiration, even as his father David, is singing (somehow) to the Most High. This appears the very opposite of the facts and is a false key which makes the difficult passages unintelligible, and the easy ones, in many cases, impossible.

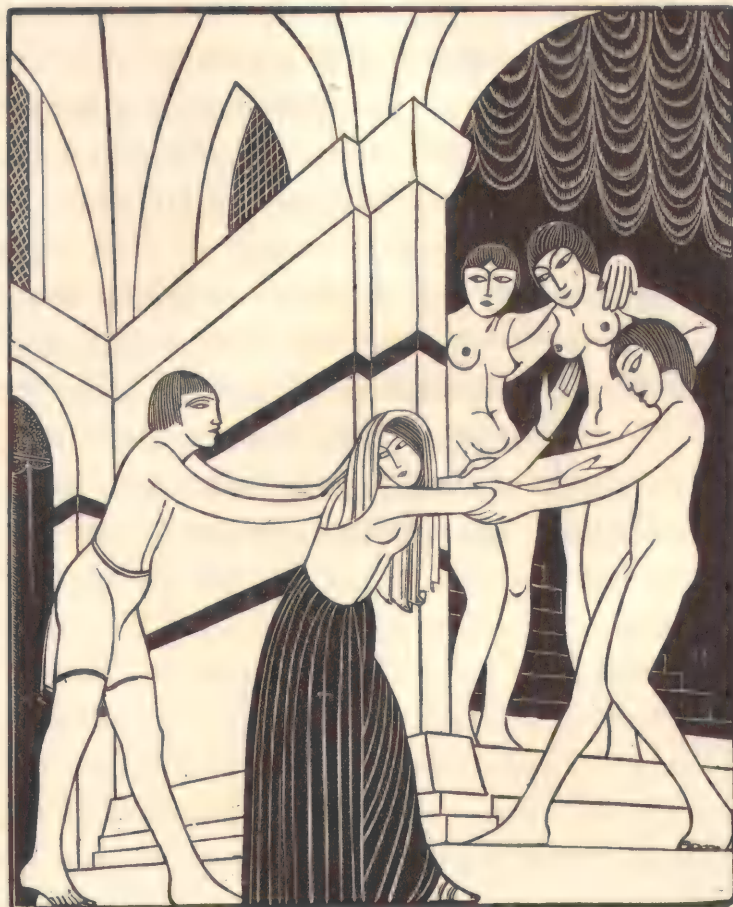
It is not to be held with Mopsuestian Theodore that the Song of Songs is mere love-lyric: neither can it be allowed to be pure allegory of the True Religion, for that were to post-date it somewhat wildly; nor can the author be lessoned concerning his own book. On the contrary this present edition is advanced as a set of suggestions helpful to the unbroken tradition of Jew and Christian that whereas the letter is of human the spirit is of Divine Love. No more is the letter concerned with true or untrue amorists merely; it deals faithfully with both kinds, and by so much grows clearer in general and in particular. Some pious readers were wont to consider the whole passage about the feet in sandals and so forth as much too luscious to belong to Holy Writ, and went so far as to omit it as being interpolated. Rather is it the culmination of the evidence for the prosecution, sensuality speaking its mind and inviting ridicule.

THE EDITOR.











ACT I.  
IN SOLOMON'S HAREM.

Scene I.

A WOMAN:

**LET** HIM kiss me with the kiss of his mouth! . . .

CHORUS: Better than wine thy endearments  
Fragrant with choicest unguents:

Thy name is oil outpouring  
So the young maidens are in love with thee.

THE GIRL (*Present against her will, cries aloud  
to her true love*): Take me behind thee! Let us flee!  
'Fragrance of thine unguents!'  
The King has brought me into his harem!

CHORUS (*varying the refrain*):  
Our gladness, our delight is all in thee,  
Far better thine endearments are than wine,  
Right are they to love thee.

THE GIRL: Black am I but I am comely, O daughters of Jerusalem:  
Like the tents of Kedar, like Solomon's pavilions!

Wonder not that I am dusky

For the sun hath changed my colour!

My mother's sons made scorn of me,

They sent me out to mind the vineyards:

Alas! mine own I minded ill. . . .

My soul's love, tell me where thou pasturest,

Where retest thou thy flock at noon?

So that I go not straying after thy fellows' flocks!

CHORUS: If this thou reck not, O most fair of women,  
get thee back again to following the flock,  
and feed thy kids beside the shepherd's tents.

SOLOMON: To the chosen of my horse in the chariots  
from Pharaoh have I likened thee, my love:

Thy cheeks are fair with circlets:

Thy neck with strings of corals:

We will make thee necklets of gold, of gold studded with silver.



THE GIRL: While the King was reclining  
mine own spikenard gave out his odour.  
A bunch of myrrh is my beloved to me:  
he shall rest between my breasts.



My beloved is to me as a cluster of henna  
from the vineyards of Engaddi.

SOLOMON: Yea thou art fair, my love,  
Yea thou art fair,  
Thine eyes are as doves' eyes.

THE GIRL (*to the absent one*):  
Yea *thou* art fair, my love, and winsome.  
Our bed is strewn of greenery.

SOLOMON: Our palace-beams are cedarn,  
Our panels are of cypress.

(*She puts him off singing a folk-song*):

THE GIRL: I am a rose of Sharon,  
A lily of the valley.

HER LOVER (*overhearing*): As a lily among thorns  
Is my love among the maidens.

THE GIRL: As an apple-tree amid the wild-wood  
So is my love among the youths.  
I have delighted to sit down in its shadow  
And its fruit is sweet to my taste.

(*He comes in.*) He brought me into his winehouse  
And the ensign he raised was love.  
Stay me up with sweetmeats,  
Prop me about with apples  
For I am faint with love.



*(She murmurs as she swoons away):*  
His left hand underneath my head,  
His right hand round about me.



THE LOVER: I conjure ye, daughters of Jerusalem,  
by gazelles and woodland hinds,  
Stir not, wake not my beloved  
Until she list.



Scene II.

THE GIRL (*in dream*): Hark! my true love!  
Lo! he cometh bounding on the mountains,  
skipping on the hills.



My love is like a roe or a young fawn.  
See! he stands behind our wall,  
Looking thro' the windows, peering thro' the trellis.  
Hark! my love, speaking says to me:



'Arise: make haste, my love, my dove,  
My winsome, come away!  
For winter now is over, the rain is done and gone:  
The flowers are appearing in our land,  
The singing-season is come:  
Our fields have rumour of the ring-dove's cooing:  
The fig-tree hath put forth her tender tips,  
The vines in blossom are exhaling fragrance,  
Arise, my love, my winsome, come away!  
My dove in the clefts of the rock,  
    in the crannies of the cliff,  
Shew me thy face,  
Let me hear thy cooing,  
For sweet thy voice is, comely is thy face.'

*(She sings a snatch):*

'Catch us those foxes!  
The little foxes that spoil the vines,  
For our vineyard is in bloom.'

My love is mine and I am his,  
His, that feeds among the lilies:  
And till the day breathe and the shadows flee  
Come back, my love, and be thou like a roe  
Or a hind's fawn upon the clefted mountains.



**O**N my bed by night I sought  
Him whom my soul loveth:  
I sought, and found him not.  
I said: 'I will arise and go about the city:  
In market-place and highway will I seek  
Him whom my soul loveth.'



I sought, and found him not.  
The city watchmen met me on their round:  
'Have you seen him whom my soul loveth?'  
And hardly had I passed them by  
When found I him whom my soul loveth.  
I laid hold of him and I would not let go  
Until I brought him to my mother's house,  
Even to the chamber of her that bore me.

THE LOVER (*to shew she sleeps*): I conjure ye,  
daughters of Jerusalem, by gazelles and woodland hinds,  
Stir not, awake not my beloved  
Until she list.







ACT II.  
PROLOGUE.

CHOIR OF MEN:

Who is this coming up thro' the desert  
*Versicle.* Like a pillar of incense-smoke,  
Of myrrh and frankincense  
And every powder of the perfumer?

Lo, round the litter of Solomon,  
Threescore valiant men of Israel's bravest  
*Response.* All men-at-arms, deeply tried in war.  
Every man with sword on thigh  
Against the night alarums.

King Solomon hath made him a litter of lebanon wood,  
*Versicle.* Silvern posts, golden awning, purple slings,  
In the midst he set a beauty from the daughters of  
Jerusalem.

ALL: Go forth, ye daughters of Jerusalem  
And see King Solomon in the diadem  
Wherewith his mother crowned him in the day of his espousals,  
In the day of his heart's joy.

## SERENADE.



SOLOMON : How beautiful thou art, my love,  
How beautiful thou art !  
Thine eyes are like dove's eyes behind thy veil.  
Thy hair is like a flock of goats adown the slope of Gilead,



Thy teeth as ewes like-shapen come from washing,  
Well mated every one and not one barren.  
Thy lips are like a scarlet braid,  
Thy mouth is sweet.  
Thy cheek is like cloven-pomegranate behind thy veil.  
Thy neck is like the tower of David  
    builded for an armoury,  
A thousand breastplates hanging in it,  
All bucklers of brave men.  
Thy two breasts are like young twin-roes  
    that graze among the lilies.

THE GIRL (*dreaming*): 'Until the day breathe and the shadows  
    flee, I will betake me to the mountain of myrrh,  
    the hill of frankincense.'

THE LOVER (*serenading*): All fair art thou, my love,  
And there is not a speck on thee!  
Come away, my spouse, come away!  
Come down from Lebanon, come!  
Look on me from topmost Amana Senir and Hermon  
Out of the lion's den,  
Down from the mountains where the leopards dwell.



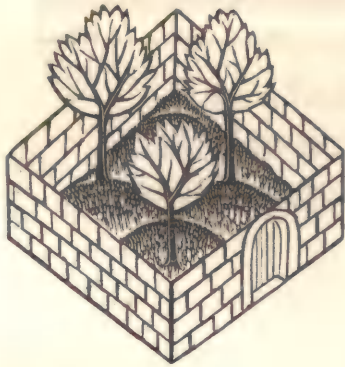
THE LOVER: Thou hast wounded my heart,  
my sister, my spouse, thou hast wounded my heart,  
With one eye of thine, one coral of thy necklet.  
How lovely thy caressing, my sister, my spouse,  
Sweeter than wine are thy endearments,  
Beyond all odorous spices the fragrance of thy balm.  
Thy lips, my spouse, are like the dropping honeycomb,  
Honey and milk beneath thy tongue  
And the odour of thy garments is like Lebanon.  
My sister, my spouse, is a garden enclosed,  
A spring fenced round, a fountain sealed.  
A pleasance planted with pomegranates  
And every orchard fruit.



Henna with spikenard,  
Spikenard and saffron,  
Sugar cane and cinnamon, each Lebanonian tree.  
Myrrh and aloes with every spice excellent:  
A fountain in a garden,  
A well of living waters  
Streaming down from Lebanon!  
O North wind waken  
And O South wind come  
Blow through my garden  
And set its spice aflow.

THE GIRL: Let my love come into his garden  
And taste of his precious fruits.

THE LOVER: I am come into my garden, my sister, my spouse,  
I have gathered my myrrh and my balsam,  
I have eaten my honey in the comb,  
I have drunken my wine and my milk.  
Feast, O friends, and drink,  
Drink deep, my best-beloved!



ACT III.



THE GIRL (*still in the harem*):  
I sleep, but my heart is wakeful:  
The voice of my beloved knocking:



'Open to me, my sister,  
My love, my dove, my undefiled:  
For my head is dew-besprent,  
My locks are dripping with the night.'

'I have put off my garment,  
How should I don it again?  
I have washed my feet,  
How should I defile them?'

My beloved now put his hand thro' the wicket  
And my bosom quaked at his touch.

I arose to open to my beloved:  
My hands were found dripping with myrrh,  
My fingers all wet with its flowing.

I opened the bolt of my door to my love  
But my love had turned away, was gone.

My soul had melted at his voice:

I sought him and found not:

I called him and he answered not.

The keepers that go about the city found me:  
They smote me and they bruised me:  
The keepers of the wall stripped off my mantle.  
I adjure you, daughters of Jerusalem,  
If ye find my beloved, tell him  
That I am dying of love.





CHORUS: Wherein is thy beloved better than another  
O fairest among women?

Wherein is thy beloved better than another  
That thou dost charge us so?

THE GIRL: My love is white and ruddy,  
He is choicest out of thousands.

His head is like fine gold,  
Lissom his locks like palm trees,  
Black as the raven.

His eyes are like doves' eyes  
Glistening over the water-brooks,  
Like doves that bathe in milk  
And perch on a brimming well.

His cheeks are like a bed of balsam,  
Like a bank of aromatic herbs:

His lips like lilies dropping myrrh,  
His hands are shapely as though golden,  
Starry with stones of Tarshish.

His body as polished ivory inlaid with sapphires:  
His legs are as pillars of marble set upon plinths of gold.  
His form is like to Lebanon, upstanding like the cedars.  
His throat discourseth sweetness,  
He is altogether lovely.  
Such is my beloved, such my friend,  
Ye daughters of Jerusalem.

CHORUS: Whither is thy beloved gone  
O fairest among women?  
Whither has he turned aside  
And we will seek him with thee?

THE GIRL: My beloved is gone down into his garden,  
Down to his beds of balsam,  
To feed in the gardens  
And to gather lilies.  
I am his and he is mine  
My love that feeds among the lilies.







## ACT IV.

### Scene I.

SOLOMON: Thou art beautiful, my love, as Tirzah,  
winsome as Jerusalem, dreadful as embannered armies.  
Turn thine eyes away from me, for they awe me.  
Thy hair is like a flock of goats adown the slopes of Gilead,  
Thy teeth are like a flock of ewes like-shapen,  
Well mated every one, and not one barren;  
Thy cheeks are like cloven pomegranate,  
A-gleam behind thy veil.

*(Her persistence is winning release.)*

THE LOVER (*without*):

**Q**UEENS there be three-score,  
And concubines four-score,  
And young maids numberless.  
One only is my dove, my undefiled,  
She is her mother's only one  
The chosen of her that bore her;  
The young maids saw and called her blest  
The queens too, and the concubines,  
And praised her.



Scene II.

CHORUS (*harem*): Who is this whose coming forth  
is like the morning springing,  
fair as moon, bright as sun,  
dreadful as embannered armies?

THE GIRL (*turning away and singing to herself*):  
I went down into the nut-grove  
to see the valley-greenery and if the vine had budded  
and the pomegranate were in bloom.  
Or ever I was ware, my wandering mind  
set me upon the chariots of these great folk.

CHORUS: Turn, turn, O Shulamite,  
Prithee turn that we may look on thee!

DANCING-GIRL: Why look on the Shulamite  
as if she were a dance Mahanaim? (*She dances*).

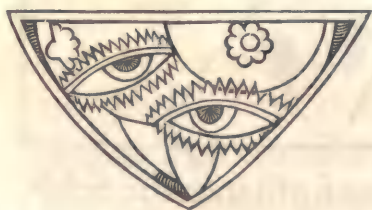






SOLOMON (*to the dancer*): How comely is thy stepping  
in the sandals, O Prince's daughter!  
The junctions of thy thighs are like a chain  
wrought by a cunning craftsman.

Thy navel a round bowl of generous wine;  
Thy belly like a mound of wheat set about with lilies;  
Thy two breasts are like young twin-roe of the gazelle;  
Thy neck is as a tower of ivory;  
Thine eyes are like the fish-pools in Heshbon  
by the gate Bathrabbim;  
Thy nose is like the Tower of Lebanon  
looking over to Damascus.  
The head on thee is like to Carmel, its tresses skeins of purple,  
A King is held in their meshes.  
How fair art thou, how comely my dearest, for delights!  
Thy stature is like a palm-tree,  
Thy breasts are as grape-clusters!  
I said: I will climb into the palm-tree,  
I will clutch the branches,  
And thy breasts shall be as vine clusters,  
Thy breath as apple-odours,  
Thy palate like choicest wine, dropping drowsy sweet  
for the quaffing of thy dear love.



Scene III.

THE GIRL (*her last word to the harem*):  
I am my true love's, and his longing is for me.

(*Free to go, or slipping out while  
SOLOMON is enthralled by the DANCER,  
she meets her LOVER outside*):



Come, love, let us fare forth into the fields,  
and in the hamlet lodge.



Then up early to the vineyard,  
to see if the vine-stocks be in bud,  
if the tendrils be unfolding,  
if the pomegranate flower :



there will I give my breasts to thee.  
The love-apple smells sweet, every fruit  
is at our gate; both new and old, dear love,  
I have laid up for thee.  
Oh! that thou wert given me for brother,  
suckled at my mother's breast, so that  
finding thee without I could kiss thee  
and none make scorn of me therefor!

I would clasp thee close  
and bring thee to my mother's house:  
there thou shouldst teach me all,  
and I would drench thee with spiced wine,  
the juice of my pomegranates.



(*swooning*) His left hand underneath my head,  
his right hand round about me!

THE LOVER: I charge you, daughters of Jerusalem,  
that you stir not, wake not my beloved  
until she list.



Scene IV. Their Village.

CHORUS (*introducing LOVER, who carries GIRL asleep*):

Who is this coming up from the desert,  
drowning in delight, stayed upon her true love?

THE LOVER (*laying her down*):

I awoke thee under the apple tree.

Lo! the house where thy mother was in labour with thee,  
where she was in travail that bore thee.

THE GIRL: Set me as a seal upon thy heart,  
as a signet on thine arm,

For love is strong as death;  
Jealousy is hard as hell, its light is blazing brands.

CHORUS: The great waters cannot quench love,  
Nor the floods drown it:

If a man gave all his substance to buy love,  
he would but purchase fleeing.



## EPILOGUE.

A BROTHER OF THE GIRL: We have a little sister without paps:  
What shall we do with our sister the day she is asked forth?

ANOTHER BROTHER: If she be a wall,  
let us make her silvern bulwarks,  
If she be a door, let us panel her with cedar.

THE GIRL: I have been a wall: my breasts have been my towers,  
so in his eyes was I  
as one who should have peace.

King Peaceful had a vineyard at Baal-Hamon,  
he let it out to keepers at a thousand silver pieces a man.  
Behold, my vineyard is in front of me:

*(scoffing at her brothers)*

A thousand pieces, Solomon, for thee;  
As for those husbandmen—two hundred say.

THE LOVER: Fair lady of this garden, our friends  
are hearkening, let me hear thy voice.

GIRL *(singing the refrain of the whole work)*:  
'Flee away, beloved, like the roe, or a hind's fawn  
upon the spicy mountains.'

FINIS.







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